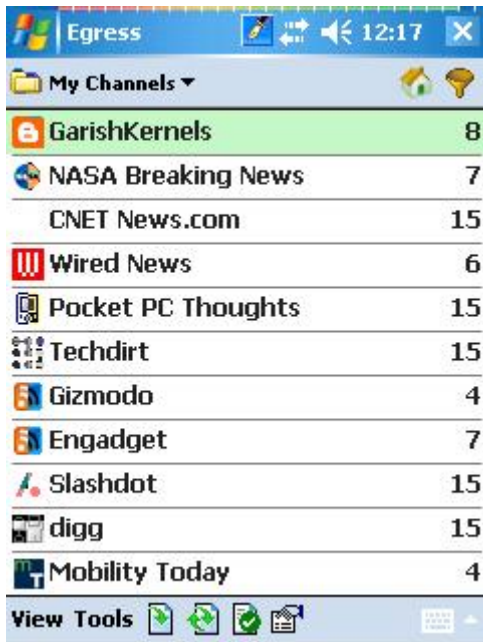


A Pocket PC Must Have: The Egress Review

By: Chris Carnabatu

Have you ever wanted to read news articles on your Pocket PC? I know, that's nothing new, but how about reading from your favorite news source AND listening to your favorite podcast? Maybe even check out the latest articles from your favorite blog? My fellow Pocket PC users, do I have a treat for you. Enter GairshKernels' Egress. Egress, an RSS aggregator, is your one and only app which serves your every blogging and podcasting desire with enough options to tweak your heart out. But before we begin with the review, let's give a short overview of what RSS is and what an RSS aggregator's job includes. RSS, which stands for really simple syndication, is essentially what it stands for. Websites, which provide RSS content such as news or blogs, distribute these feeds (content which is constantly updated) to many users simultaneously. These users download the provided data via a wide number of RSS clients or RSS aggregators. Egress is exactly this—an application which basically manages and organizes your subscriptions and content in a user friendly package. Now that we have a little idea of what Egress does, let's move on to how well it does what it's supposed to do. When starting Egress for the first time, registered users will see a popup asking whether or not users would prefer Egress storing its content in a user defined directory or the default directory. I recommend creating a new folder on an external memory card and setting that as the storage location. If you want to listen to podcasts or you just have a lot of subscriptions, this is probably the best option because of podcast files which often times are large and storage demanding as are certain picture containing subscriptions. After this is done, another friendly popup will appear asking whether or not users would like Egress' default subscription list, a great way to start off experimenting with different subscriptions. One has the ability to add and delete subscriptions and folders anytime, so I recommend that



users take advantage of this option. Now we are introduced to the home screen as shown in this first graphic. Pretty nice, isn't it? I added some channels and took out some folders to further personalize my Egress homepage. Now, if we browse through this small list of subscriptions, you will probably notice some numbers on the right hand side. Those are the numbers of unread articles—convenient, huh? I often find myself forgetting what channels I read and waste time tapping through subscriptions searching for new articles. At the top left hand corner, a drop down menu with subscription channels is present enabling users to switch between different user defined folders. This feature enables user to separate subscriptions into different channels depending on taste. For example, you could create a new channel folder entitled “Technology” and stick all the tech related feeds in that folder—a type of filtering process. Now that we know how to filter certain subscriptions, let's look

at how we can actually subscribe to content on Egress and how easy it is in doing so. By going to “tools” and selecting “Manage Channels...”, selecting “New”, and then “Channel” from the drop down menu, we are given a choice of how to input feed information. One can do so either by choosing from a list of subscriptions or synchronized channels, importing an OPML file, or my favorite- entering the URL as shown in the accompanying graphic. Although it would be quite the pain to tap every character in a long URL, one can simply copy and paste it into the text box.

Let’s see how a subscription feed looks like.

We’re going to take a look at NASA’s subscription as an example of the user interface. As you can see, articles are presented as headlines with white background while selected headlines display the article or summarized version (depending on the website’s method of enclosure) with a light green background. Each headline is then organized by date and displayed as “read” or “unread” by either having a bold face headline or, as in the selected article, a fine face headline.

Pretty nice stuff; I found everything I would expect so far without a hassle. In fact, if you don’t like the color scheme or layout, you can change that too to your own liking. By tapping on “tools”, a large menu will appear with one of the choices titled “options”. Now here’s where all the goodies stem from. The abilities to tweak Egress ranges from allocating an amount of storage space to be used to assigning a number to the amount of podcasts to be downloaded. As you can see, retrieval options are very flexible in that users can choose to treat podcasts as items and set a certain maximum number to be stored as well as the amount of storage to be allocated. Users will find that they can



either choose between using PIE, a third party browser, or Egress’ default browser for viewing linked content. A podcast related feature offered is the ability to generate a playlist so that users may listen to all available podcasts without having to go to different subscriptions. One feature that I particularly like is the ability to add keywords. By adding custom keywords, Egress will mark up any article matching custom keyword(s) so that finding articles on certain topics is much easier and faster. The only problem that I found concerns the downloading of certain podcasts. Some sites include all of their archived podcasts in one feed. Because of this, Egress looks at the feed and tries to download all 20 episodes. Now, downloading 20 lengthy episodes is a storage killer as well as a time consumer; however, by

tweaking the amount of items to be downloaded, users can avoid such conflicts. In total, I give Egress two thumbs way up for the stability and ease of use of the application as well as the great tech support offered. Although there are one or two adjustments to be made, I think that Egress is currently one of the most powerful RSS aggregators for the Pocket PC; Egress certainly is the most capable when it comes to downloading content and offering a wide amount of options. I would encourage anybody using a Pocket PC to give Egress a try by going <http://garishkernels.net/software.html> and downloading the trial version. You'll be hooked by the features and power Egress has to offer when it comes to entering subscription information, buffing up the layout to your own liking, listening to your favorite podcast while having a fresh cup of joe, and viewing articles with rich pictures in a user friendly window.